

Game Development: Starting by Healing the Players

Chapter 4: A Helper

Hearing Ruan Ningxue's words, Chen Xu couldn't help but blush with embarrassment.

However, he quickly regained his composure. He cleared his throat lightly to ease the awkward atmosphere and began thinking of an excuse.

"Well... there are actually several reasons."

Sitting across the table, Ruan Ningxue pouted.

Men's mouths—they're all lies!

"Still, I can accept all the conditions you mentioned. But I have one requirement in return," Ruan Ningxue looked at Chen Xu with a bright smile.

Chen Xu froze for a moment.

He had still been wondering how to persuade her.

To be honest, when he came to ask for her help, he hadn't been very confident. He simply wanted to give it a try.

After all, he knew his own situation.

Money?

He definitely couldn't afford to pay her right now. Even if he somehow could, there'd be no budget left to make the game.

There were still plenty of essential assets and resources he needed to purchase.

Relying on the fact that they were senior and junior from the same university?

She wasn't obligated to help him just because of that. Besides, from any angle, it sounded like he was trying to sell her an unrealistic dream.

But now...

There seemed to be hope.

"What kind of requirement, Senior?" Chen Xu asked.

"One month."

"And afterward, if your game's sales aren't good enough, you'll have to come work for me."

"You'll sign at least two doujin contracts. Of course, unlike you, I won't expect free labor—I promise to pay you properly," Ruan Ningxue said with a smile.

Chen Xu paused before quickly recovering.

As for drawing doujin works, he didn't really mind. In his previous life, there had been quite a few famous female doujin artists.

For example, Yuzuki N and Nishizawa 5mm...

Ahem— Actually, Chen Xu had never heard of them before, let alone seen any of their works. Everything he knew came from a friend. Obviously.

"So... what counts as poor sales?" Chen Xu asked after a moment.

If she considered several hundred thousand copies to be the minimum, he really wasn't confident.

After all, this was a parallel world. The gaming industry here was quite different from his previous life.

Although piracy wasn't an issue, the market itself was also very different.

Without capital to fund marketing and promotion, relying solely on word-of-mouth recommendations from players would be extremely difficult.

Even many critically acclaimed indie games from his previous life that eventually sold millions—or even tens of millions—of copies hadn't become popular overnight.

Many of them spent six months or even a year in obscurity before taking off.

Even a masterpiece like *The Binding of Isaac* had been relatively unknown during its early days.

No matter how good the product was, it could still go unnoticed if no one knew it existed.

So if Ruan Ningxue demanded one hundred thousand sales in the first month, Chen Xu figured he might as well keep working alone.

Because if he agreed, then with the game he currently planned to make, he'd most likely end up becoming a full-time doujin artist.

"Let's see..."

"Ten thousand... Hmm, no, let's make it fifty thousand."

"If your game doesn't sell 50,000 copies within one month of release, then you lose."

Ruan Ningxue took out her phone and appeared to send someone a message.

About a minute later, she looked up and gave her final number.

Hearing that, Chen Xu couldn't help but smile confidently.

Fifty thousand copies in one month?

Even though the gaming market was somewhat different from his previous life, and despite his limited startup funds, that target was practically nothing.

"No problem," Chen Xu agreed without hesitation.

"Then it's settled, Senior. We'll officially start tomorrow!"

"I'll head back and prepare everything. See you tomorrow morning!"

With that, he waved goodbye to Ruan Ningxue.

Without giving her any time to respond, Chen Xu turned around and left the café, leaving Ruan Ningxue sitting there, momentarily stunned.

...Did I set the bar too low?

Thinking that, she hurriedly opened her contacts and called a number.

The other person answered after only two seconds.

"Sister Xin, were you really telling me the truth earlier? Is selling fifty thousand copies in one month really considered a high number?"

Ruan Ningxue thought back to Chen Xu's confident expression and couldn't help feeling puzzled.

A crisp female voice came through the phone.

"Not exactly—but it's all relative."

"You asked me what would count as impressive for someone making their very first game, with almost no money, right?"

"No funding, first-time developer, not even access to the engine resources available to professional game designers..."

"That's practically a nightmare difficulty start."

"Fifty thousand sales within one month?"

"That's S-rank difficulty."

"If he can sell even a few thousand copies in a month, I'd already consider that a passing grade."

"Really?" Ruan Ningxue asked, still only half convinced.

"Of course it's true. That's the professional judgment of someone who works in the game industry."

"By the way, Xiao Xue, are you planning to make a game? Have you finally changed your mind? I've been telling you—you should come work with me as the lead concept and character artist. We'd definitely accomplish something big together!"

Yang Xin sounded extremely excited on the other end of the phone.

"Sister Xin? Sister Xin? Hello? What did you say? My signal's terrible over here. Let's talk another time!"

Hearing Yang Xin's increasingly enthusiastic voice, Ruan Ningxue's expression changed slightly. She held the phone farther away, said a couple of perfunctory lines, hung up, and let out a long sigh of relief.

Then, recalling what Yang Xin had just said, a smile spread across her face.

First-time game developer.

No money.

Nightmare-level difficulty.

Those labels fit Chen Xu perfectly.

Which meant...

Her assistant problem had finally been solved!

The only unfortunate part was that this assistant wouldn't officially start working for another two months.

After saying goodbye to Ruan Ningxue, Chen Xu returned to his apartment.

After tidying up the room a little, he sat down at his desk and looked at his laptop.

As a development machine, its specifications were fairly average, but for the Mirror project, it was more than sufficient.

Of course, there was no way Chen Xu could develop a larger-scale game at the moment.

He simply didn't have the money, nor did he have sufficient access rights to the official game engine's resources.

As for increasing those resource permissions, there were basically two ways.

The first was to become an officially certified game designer and continue advancing in rank.

How did you improve your rank?

Game sales, industry awards, and similar achievements all counted toward the evaluation.

The second method was much simpler and far more straightforward:

Money.

The amount of engine resources you could access was directly proportional to the amount of money you were willing—or able—to spend.

None of that, however, mattered to Chen Xu right now.

Besides, a game like Mirror didn't require many resources.

At least, the resources currently available to him were more than enough.

Sitting in front of his computer, Chen Xu began writing the first draft for Mirror—its game design document.

Even though he was the only programmer on the project, and Ruan Ningxue's role was limited to creating the illustrations, that didn't mean a design document wasn't necessary.

It was like writing an outline before composing an essay.

A solid plan would significantly improve development efficiency.